

DOSI attendance at the High Seas Treaty Symposium in Edinburgh, October 2023

Overview

After almost 20 years of negotiations, in June 2023 the High Seas Treaty, an international legally binding instrument also known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction treaty or the BBNJ treaty, was adopted at United Nations headquarters in New York. DOSI, since its inception, has been a steady provider and promoter of a much-needed deep-ocean perspective to the negotiations on the Treaty, with the work of several DOSI Working Groups specifically aligned to informing the process. While the High Seas Treaty is currently open for signature by States and regional economic integration organisations, a handful of expert contributors to the Treaty negotiations considered it timely and beneficial to hold a stocktaking symposium with the wider community of scientists, lawyers and policy makers who have been engaged in the BBNJ process. This two-day symposium (6-7 October) hosted by the University of Edinburgh at Dynamic Earth was intended to critically evaluate the potential challenges and opportunities in the next steps following the anticipated ratification of the High Seas Treaty – i.e., implementation – to achieve its biodiversity conservation and sustainability objectives.

Participants

Maria Baker and Chris Barrio's (DOSI Office) attendance was funded by the ARCADIA grant. Several other members of DOSI, including 8 members of the DOSI Core Team (see group photo below) were also present, funded by their own sources.

DOSI Actions

The symposium sessions were structured along the lines of the Treaty's four themes (1- Marine genetic resources (MGRs), including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits; 2- Area-based management tools (ABMTs), including marine protected areas (MPAs); 3- Environmental impact assessments (EIAs); 4- Capacity building and the transfer of marine technology (CB&TMT)) and its institutional setup. Invited speakers included perspectives from industry, law, science and civil society. Several DOSI members have been intimately involved in the Treaty negotiations and were invited by the organisers (who also include DOSI members) to be session chairs, panellists and keynote speakers. Several presentations mentioned DOSI. There was also the opportunity for informal gatherings and information exchange during lunch, coffee breaks and evening drinks, which seemed well appreciated by those in attendance. There was a warm sense of community and camaraderie amongst attendants, many echoing the sense of it being a long-awaited reunion of kindred spirits.

Prior to the meeting and taking advantage of Maria & Chris being in Edinburgh, where two of the DOSI BBNJ WG Leads are based, a meeting was held with Harriet and Christine to discuss the WG's next steps. Maria & Chris were also able to meet the new DOSI Office member – Bernadette Butfield – for the first time in person, also discussing important aspects of Bernadette's workload and tasks.



DOSI members (including 10 members of the DOSI Core Team) at The High Seas Treaty Symposium, Edinburgh 2023.